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UNITY - A WAY OF LIFE

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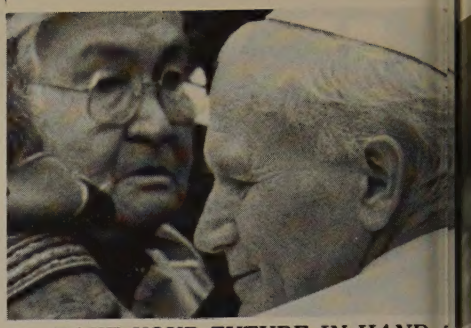
2 *A WAY OF LIFE: Unity has always been the Christian vocation. What can we do to better fulfill it? We continue our series on the Spirituality of Unity.*



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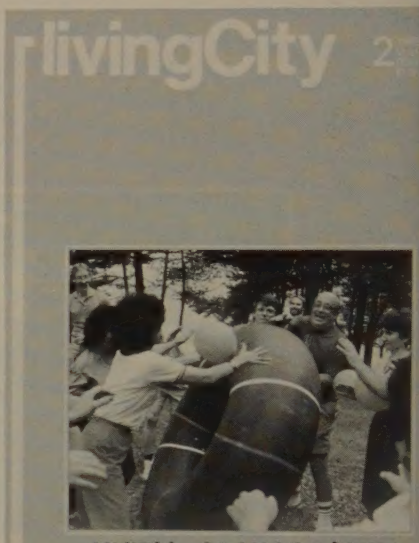

A moment of the games during the 1984 summ Mariapolis in Mansfield, Pennsylvania. T theme of the Mariapolis (the summer gatheri of the Focolare Movement) was Jesus Crucifi and Forsaken, key to unity.

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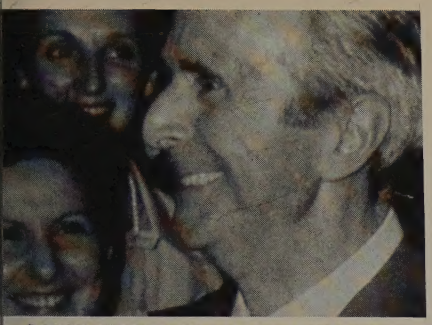
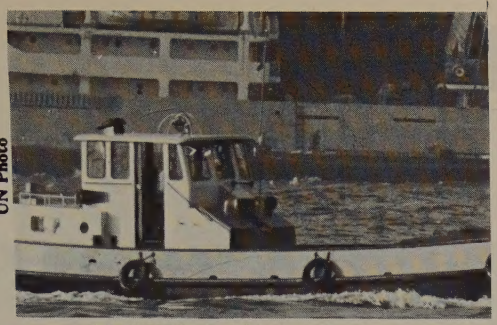


CONSTANT THRUST TOWARD A INGLE GOAL: The "Igino Giordani Prize" as been established for achievement in the elds of journalism and human promotion.



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A WAY OF LIFE

**Unity has always been the Christian vocation.
What is the Focolare Movement doing that is new?**

Without doubt all Christians have the vocation to unity. Jesus with his death and resurrection reunited all people with God and with one another. In this way, Christians who participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus are united to God among them.

All the same this unity can be more or less vital, more or less intense. Divine life, which makes us one with God and with one another, is always susceptible to new growth and fullness.

When the Movement was born, at least in our town of Trent, Christians generally practiced their faith and were, we hope, living in God's grace and therefore united to God and with one another.

However, at least with those we knew, they limited the practice of their faith to avoiding sin, not going against the ten commandments.

For them, avoiding sin was already an expression of their love for God and neighbor, and it was not actually clear to them that we also had a duty to put into practice the commandment of mutual love. It was not perfectly clear that therein lies the heart of Christianity.

People talked about Christian love, about charity, but it was usually intended to mean almsgiving.

One could say that they were united in faith but not as united in love.

Now, in the Church, the Council and many movements, which underline communion, have certainly oriented Christians towards a deeper unity in love.

Jesus said: "Love one another as I have loved you".[1] This means that we *must* love one another, and love one another "as" he loved us—to "love one another"—first of all among Christians, and love one another "as" Jesus loved us.

The Movement therefore also served (perhaps even as a pioneer in this since it was born before the Council) to bring very much into relief this "love one another", and it rediscovered —as Cardinal Benelli once observed—this "as". It is with this "as" that love brings about the unity desired by Jesus and generates his presence among people.

To better describe the situation which existed many years ago we could use the example of electricity in a house, even if examples are not always precise. The current was there (the grace of God was present in Christians' hearts) but, since the contact was missing, unity, the light, could not be seen.

Generally speaking Christians were not constantly aiming at loving their neighbor, ready to give their life for them, so the unity to which they were called never fully came about. And it is unity which gives credibility to a Christian's life because Christ is present: "May they be one so that the world may believe."[2]

The Movement has come about therefore to help give a hand to Christians to do their part in fulfilling their vocation to unity.

Moreover this "as" is clearly explained if we look at Jesus Crucified and Forsaken. The measure of Christian love is there, in Jesus Crucified and Forsaken. In loving our neighbor we must learn how to put everything aside for them, even spiritual things, as Jesus did when, out of love for us, he suffered even the apparent abandonment of his Father; he felt as if his union with God diminished. Only love which applies this measure can fully bring about unity. There is no unity without detachment. The statutes of the Focolare Movement say, in fact, that Jesus Crucified and Forsaken is "the model for all who wish to work towards

June 10, 1981. Dr. Robert Runcie, Primate of the Anglican Church, welcomes Chiara Lubich to Lambeth Palace and on that occasion presented her with "The Order of Saint Augustine of Canterbury" for her work "in and for the Anglican Communion." "Unity," he said, "should be the goal of the Church, but in these days we need specialized groups to show us how to do it."

the unity of people with God and with one another, apex of exterior but above all of interior detachment, the necessary condition for every effort of unity inspired by supernatural reasons."[3]

We could say therefore that what our movement offers to the Church is a light for illuminating the way to concretely achieving unity.

Pope John Paul II sees our Movement as "a way of life."

Also I think that Dr. Robert Runcie, the Primate of the Anglican Church, made an important observation. One day he had asked me what our Movement wants to accomplish and I answered, "The unity of Christians with God and with one another." He then added, "This should be the goal of the Church, but in these days we need specialized groups to show us how to do it."

Moreover, it is often this way, I think, for the charisms that the Holy Spirit sends to the Church. Thinking of Saint Frances (without of course wanting to make any comparisons with the saints), people knew what poverty meant, but he better explained it by living it in a certain way.

This is also true for Saint Theresa of the Little Flower and her way of confidence in God, and so on with other saints.

I believe that today, because of the thrust towards unity that the Holy Spirit is impressing upon today's world, unity needed to be underlined and lived in a better way beginning first of all in the Catholic Church. We feel that our Movement, along with others, is called to this.

Chiara Lubich

1) Cf. Jn. 13:34; 2) cf. Jn. 17:21; 3) Ch. 1 art. 11-10.

Take your future in hand

In this issue we are continuing to publish excerpts from the principle talks given by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Canada, offering them to you for meditation and study.

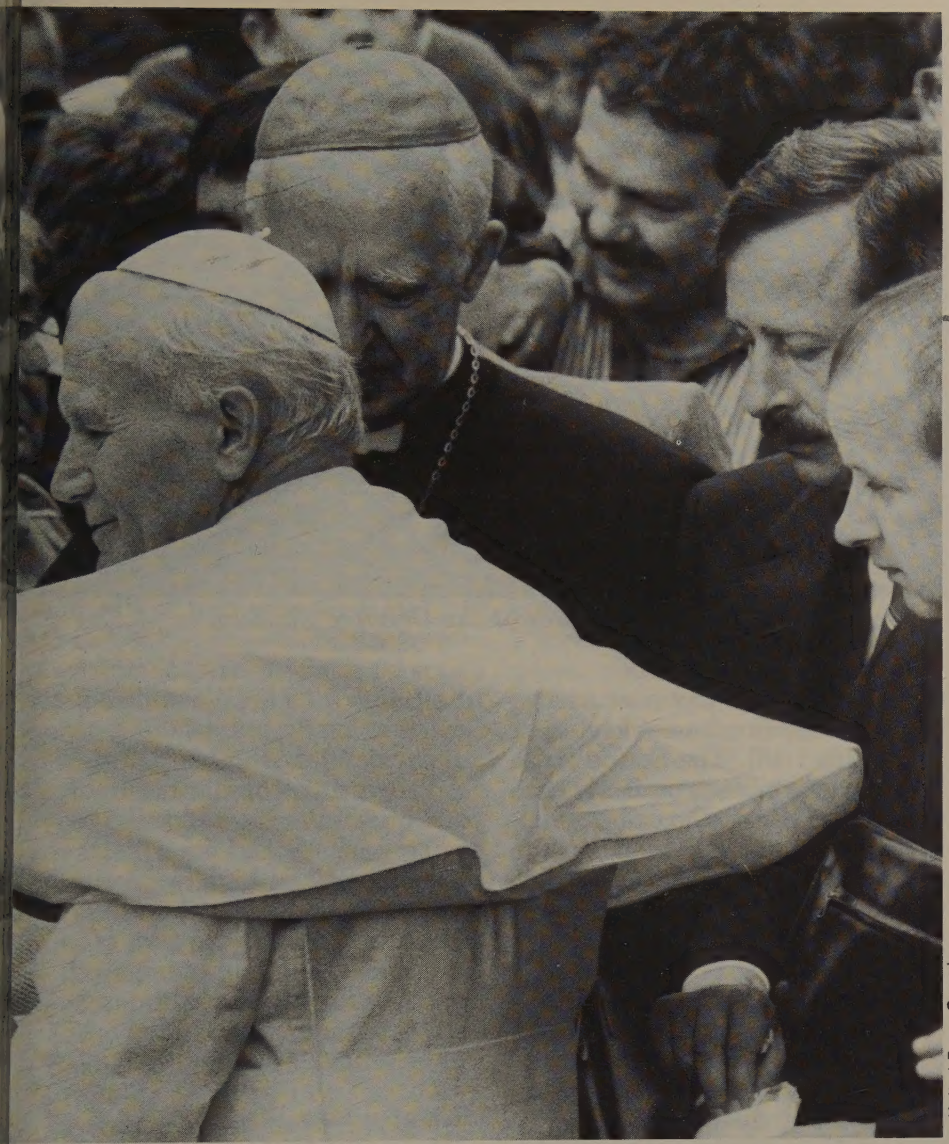
To the Native Peoples gathered to greet him at the Shrine of Saint Anne de Beaupre', Quebec the Pope said, among other things, the following:

You represent the first inhabitants of this vast continent. For centuries you have made your mark in North America with your traditions and your civilization. Other waves of settlers came from Europe with their own culture and their Christian faith. They took their place beside you. The vastness of this continent allowed you to live together in a relationship that was not always easy, but that has also had its rewards. **God gave the earth to all humankind. Today you have your own special place in this country.**

Without losing any of your cultural identity, you have understood that God has sent the Christian message to you just as he did to others. Today, I come to greet you, the native peoples who bring us close to the origins of Canada. I come to celebrate with you our faith in Jesus Christ.

Over the centuries, dear Amerindian and Innuit peoples, you have gradually discovered in your cultures special ways of living your relationship with God and with the world while remaining loyal to Jesus and to the Gospel. Continue to develop these moral and spiritual values: an acute sense of the presence of God, love of your family, respect for the aged, solidarity with your people, sharing, hospitality, respect for nature, the importance given to silence and prayer, faith in providence. Guard this wisdom preciously. To let it become impoverished would be to impoverish the people around you. To live these spiritual values in a new way requires on your part maturity, interiority, a deepening of the Christian message, a concern for the dignity of the human being and a pride in being Amerindian and Innuit. This demands the courage to eliminate every form of enslavement that might compromise your future.

Your encounter with the Gospel has not only enriched you, it has enriched the Church. We are well aware that this has not taken place without its difficulties and, occasionally, its blunders. However, and you are experiencing this today, the Gospel does not destroy what



United Press Canada

The Pope among the native peoples gathered outside the Basilica of Saint Anne de Beaupre, Quebec.

is best in you. On the contrary, it enriches as it were from within the spiritual qualities and gifts that are distinctive of your cultures (cf. *Gaudium et Spes,* No. 58). In addition, your Amerindian and Innuit traditions permit the development of new ways of expressing the message of salvation and they help us to better understand to what point Jesus is the Savior and how universal his salvation is.

This recognition of your accomplishments cannot allow us to forget the great challenges your people face in the present North American context. Like all other citizens, but more acutely, you fear the impact of economics, social and cultural change on your traditional ways of life. You are concerned about the future of your Indian and Innuit identities and about the future of your children and grandchildren. For all that, you do not reject scientific and technological progress. You perceive the challenges it represents and you know how to make the most of it.

With reason, however, you want to control your future, to preserve your cultural traits, to establish an educational system where your languages are respected.

The Bishop's Synod on "Justice in the World" (1971) stated that every people should in mutual cooperation, fashion its own economic and social development and that each people should take part in realizing the universal common good as active and responsible members of human society (cf. Proposal no. 8). It is in this perspective that you must be the architects of your own future, freely and responsibly. May the wisdom of your elders unite with the initiative and courage of your youth to meet this challenge.

Tenacity in safeguarding your personality is compatible with a spirit of dialogue and friendly acceptance among all those who have come to this country in successive waves and who are called to make up the very diverse group, which must populate and settle this area as vast as a continent.

Assured of the love God has for you, put yourselves to the task; recall without ceasing that the Church of Jesus Christ is your Church. She is the place where the sun of the word enlightens you, where you find the nourishment and strength to continue on your way. She is like those "hiding places" that your ancestors constructed all along the route of their travels, so that no one might be caught without provisions....

Now we must say goodbye. In the language of our Innuit brothers and sisters, I would like to assure you that you are my friends, all you who are loved by God! *Ilannaarivapsi tamapso naglijauvusi jisusinut.*

I will carry you in my heart and in my prayers. I will entrust you to Mary and to Saint Anne so that you may grow in faith and bear witness, in your own way, to Jesus Christ in this country. In the name of Jesus Christ, I bless you with all my heart. ►

Youth at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal.

On the evening of September 11, the Pope met with 70,000 young people from 21 dioceses of Quebec in the Olympic Stadium of Montreal. In a powerful and moving talk he forcefully affronted, with the youth present, the dangers that they face in today's world, encouraging then not to take the "easy path" in life.

My dear young people, as part of my visit to Quebec it is a great joy for me to be with you....

(Together we have read) that fundamental text that begins the Gospel of John. And so you place our meeting under the sign of the life that is stronger than death, under the sign of the light that darkness cannot overcome, under the sign of the Word, the eternal Word of God, who comes to dwell among us in Christ....

I have come as a witness

One of you, a young girl from Quebec, wrote to me: "Give us your secret of responding to love and of having confidence in Jesus." I have not come to reveal a secret to you. I have come as a witness, as John the Baptist came, to witness to the light. I have come to invite you to open your eyes to the light of life, to Christ Jesus. If we listen to his word, if we follow him, if we discover the greatness of his love for all men and all women of every age, then we will know that life is worth living, and better still, that it is worth giving.

In the passage of the Gospel which has been your inspiration this evening, John tells us that Jesus is the Word, that he is the life and the light of men. Certainly no one has ever seen God but the Son can reveal him to us (Jn. 1:18). The Son is the Word who expresses perfectly the will of the Father who calls us all to share the unparalleled beauty and purity of his infinite love through the inexhaustible generosity of his creation....

However, there is darkness: when life disappoints us, when life wounds us, when one does not find happiness, when the heart hardens and when brothers and sisters are divided and fight one another. Darkness overcomes the light: humanity sets up, as it were, a screen, and experiences in anguish the difficulties of life. The world no longer recognizes the one who has called it to life, a life that should blossom in a universal fraternal union. Darkness brings a chilly closing in on oneself, it makes one incapable of loving freely and generously and truth is lost in falsehood. In the darkness, our blinded gaze can no longer perceive the Father whose love remains faithful, in spite of the estrangement of his sons and daughters, in spite of all breaches of friendship.

"In him there is no darkness" (1 Jn. 1:5).

"The light shines on in the darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it." The Word was "the true light which gives light to all men." "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (cf. Jn. 1:5, 9, 14).

In regard to the dark side of your questions, I would like to say to you, "Stand erect and hold your heads high, for your deliverance is near at hand" (Lk. 21:28). Jesus, the Son of God, "true God from true God, light from light", lives among us. "In him was life and the life was the light of men."

Gift of a new life

These words are the introduction to the whole of the Good News: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son resplendent in the glory of the Father, became one of us: he begins an amazing contest with the forces of darkness; a contest in which the powers of darkness cannot overcome the strength of Christ, which is of a totally different order, for he is only strong in the gift of himself to his Father for his brothers and sisters. It is a struggle in which he accepts to share our weakness and our loneliness, to endure the hostility of men to the point where he cries out: "It is now the hour of the power of darkness" (Lk. 23:53). But the darkness will not over come him; he fights with the arms of peace.

Against the excess of power, Jesus sets unselfishness: he chose to be the Servant.

" ...you can count on the fidelity of God, who is love."

Against the excess of pride, Jesus sets humility: "I am not seeking my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 5:30).

Against hatred which rejects and kills, Jesus sets forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:24).

Against the blind power of death, Jesus sets the love of him who gives himself: "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down freely" (Jn. 10:18).

Against the absurd watch over his body in the tomb, Jesus sets the freedom of the Resurrection. "The Son of man in his day will be like the lightning which flashes from one end of the sky to the other" (Lk. 17:24).

To those who despair of life and experience the threat of nothingness, Jesus offers the gift of new life: "This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. Him I will raise up" (Jn. 6:40)....

My friends in the letters I received from you I see two series of questions: on the one hand you say: "Speak to us of Jesus Christ, of hope and of faith", and on the other hand you write: "Help us to resolve the difficulties that overshadow our personal, social and religious life."

I wanted first of all to speak to you about the light of Christ.... Seek nowhere else an inspiration for answers to your questions ... You must remember this in moments of doubt. If you follow Christ, you will develop your full potential. You will be seekers after truth because it alone makes us free. I appeal to your inner dynamism: you will know how to move toward to the solutions of your problems by listening to the whole Gospel, by reflecting on it with your elders, and in your various Christian youth groups. Mobilize together your energies: be clear about what constitutes the foundation of your life; recognize the light of Christ; it will show you how to escape from the circles in which you might enclose yourselves. With him, you will love life!

In times of darkness do not seek an escape. Have the courage to resist the dealers in deception who make capital of your hunger for happiness and who make you pay dearly for a moment of "artificial paradise". What claims to be a shortcut to happiness leads nowhere. It turns you away from that intelligent self-discipline which builds up the person. Have the courage not to take the easy path; have the courage to reverse direction if you have taken it. And know how to lend a helping hand to those of your companions who are haunted by despair when the darkness of the world is too cruel for them.

Many of you have been affected by unemployment. Here it is the whole problem of a changing society that touches you.... Do not allow the difficulties to destroy the resilience of your own personality; take your future in hand.

Ask yourselves too what you expect from professional life.... Be creative! Do not be conspicuous by your absence when the future of the world is being shaped! You already share responsibility for it.

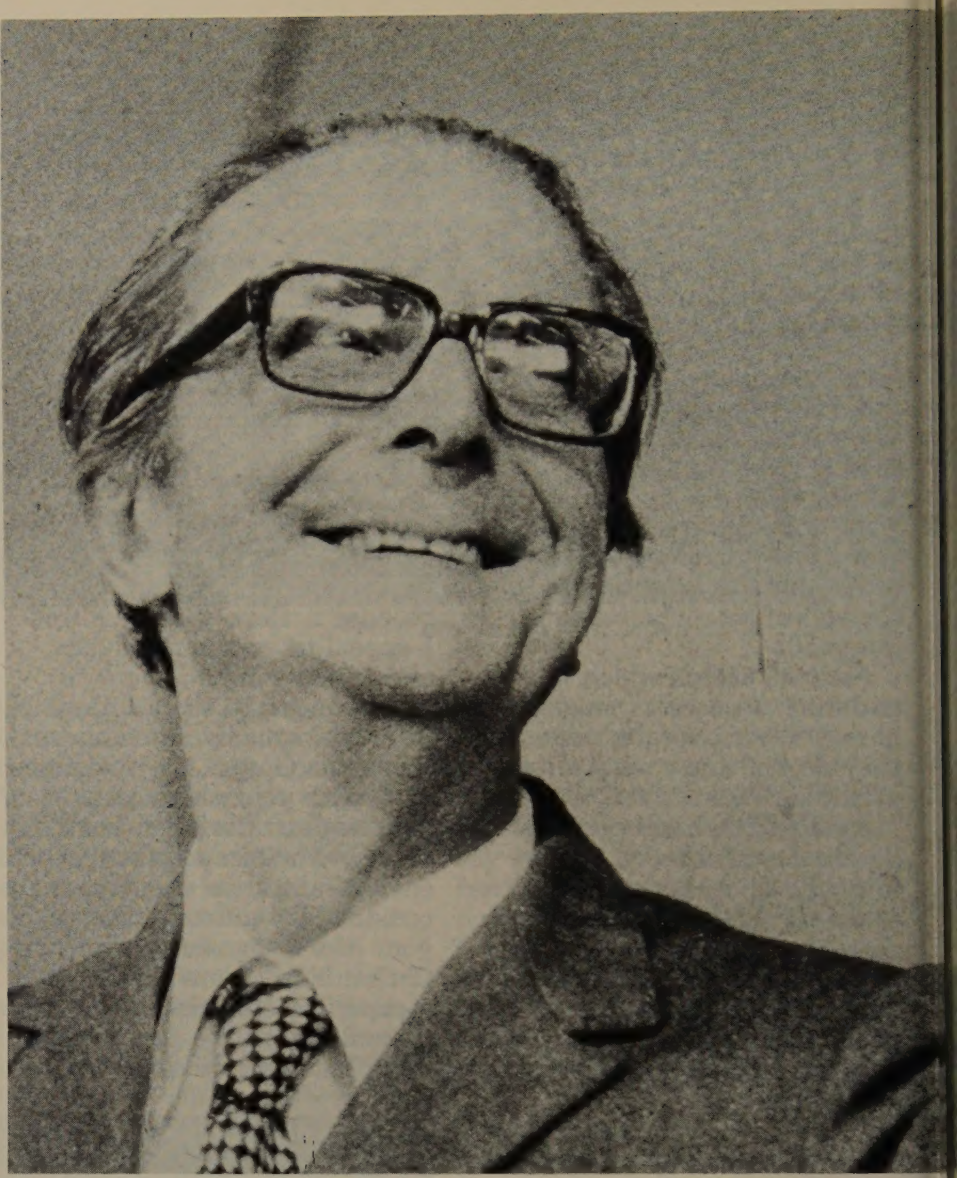
" ...recognize the light of Christ;
it will show you how to escape from
the circles in which you might enclose yourselves.
With him you will have life!"

You are often critical, and rightly so, of a society so hungry for consumer goods that it destroys nature and lays waste its resources. But ask yourselves what value you put on gain, on the possession of riches. Are you free in regard to money? How far are you prepared to share?

...Broaden your vision beyond your own milieu and your own country. Your brothers and sisters in vast regions of the world are without even the necessities of

(Continued on page 28)

A constant thrust toward a single goal

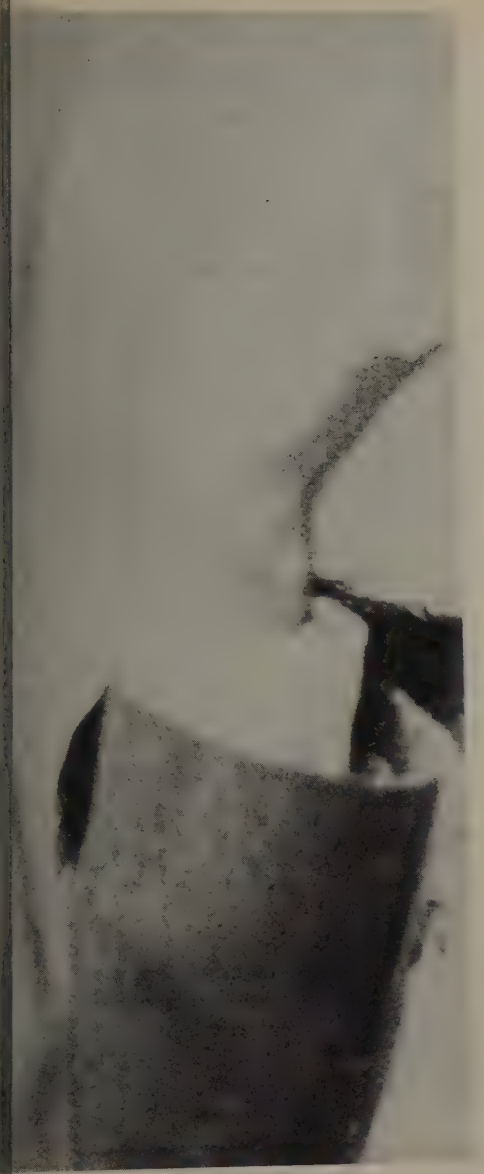


by ORESTE PALIOTTI

The town of Tivoli near Rome, recently instituted a prize to be awarded for achievement in the fields of "writing, journalism and human promotion", and named the prize after one of the town's most illustrious citizens, Igino Giordani, or Foco, as we always called him. The first person to receive the prize was Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement. It was awarded to her because, as the judges noted, she is the person who most represents the ideal thrust which animated Igino Giordani's life.

September 28, 1984. Today in Tivoli the town is honoring one of its most illustrious sons, Igino Giordani, by awarding a prize established in his name for achievement in the fields of "writing, journalism and human promotion." On this day it is being awarded to Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, first personality to receive this prize. The judges determined that Chiara, more than any other person, represented the spiritual ideals which motivated Giordani's life.

Different speakers were present for the ceremony, as well as politicians, members of the Italian parliament, leaders of various cultural activities, as well as friends and fellow citizens of Igino Giordani.



"You contemplate yourself and you no longer see anything. You see your neighbor and you contemplate God."

IGINO GIORDANI

Left: Igino Giordani (1894-1980). Above: Via Maggiore in Tivoli where Igino Giordani was born.

In outlining the motivation behind the establishment of the prize, Tommaso Sorgi, a member of the Italian parliament, emphasized in his talk Giordani's commitment to human promotion, in the religious field as well as the political field, which characterized his very rich and varied personality, a commitment which makes his work valid also for future generations: "His entire life, all his activities as a writer and thinker demonstrate his constant thrust towards a single goal: the liberation of the person from political and economic domination, the promotion of the person as a whole." It was understood for Giordani, that "the freedom and the dignity of the person find their origin and meaning in the acceptance of the revolution which began 2000 years ago and is reproposed in every era with perennial originality by Christianity."

There is, however, an unmistakable swerve at a certain point in Giordani's life. It comes about through his meeting with Chiara Lubich, with the ideal of unity of the Focolare Movement in which, as he once put it, "I saw all my religious and civil aspirations finally realizable." Tommaso Sorgi then outlined in his talk the story of Chiara and the Movement she founded, touching on some of the more significant steps of its history, those which best reveal "its outline and foundation: the divine opened out onto the social." He described its evolution from the choice of those most in need in a Trent devastated by the war to the birth of the "volunteers' and of the "New Humanity Movement"[1] which reaches out to all of society in an effort to animate already existing structures, and create new ones, all imbued with the Gospel spirit. He mentioned the little cities of the Movement which already exist in several continents, the work being carried out in Third World countries, the ecumenical contacts with members of Christian Churches, with the faithful of the great religions and with men and women of good will who want to work together for peace and the unity of all peoples. His talk gave a brief but concise summary of the reasons which motivated the judges in choosing this year's winner.

The ceremony had all the warmth of a family gathering. Following the talks the mayor ►

presented Chiara Lubich with the prize, a composition which wanted to express the offering which the person makes out of love to God through his or her daily life, united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

The divine and the human together, seen "above all as the source of all human promotion," this, Tommaso Sorgi had reminded the audience just minutes before, was the fundamental concept that Igino Giordani had put at the basis of his social theory and through which he affirmed the close interdependence which exists between human advancement and the relationship with the divine. He had, in fact, expressed it in a short phrase: "Our Father in heaven ... our daily bread."

1) See inside back cover.

In him you could read the Gospel

The various talks given in the course of the evening traced Igino Giordani's ethical-political profile and illustrated his position and efforts in his commitment for human advancement. Chiara Lubich's talk wanted instead to describe Igino Giordani the Christian and the Focolarino. The following is the central part of her talk.

Once someone said that if, by chance, all the Gospels disappeared from the earth, Christians should be such that, just by looking at their lives, the Gospel could be rewritten.

Igino Giordani was one of these Christians. On the day of his funeral (thousands of people from all over the world were present), the Gospel passage which speaks of the Beatitudes was read. All of those who had known Igino Giordani well, were unanimous in affirming that he had lived them all.

He was exceptionally "pure of heart." It was this purity which provoked him to define our earthly existence, since it is always followed by the providential love of God (for better or, as they say, for 'worse'), as a divine adventure.

This purity of heart strengthened his most sacred sentiments at the same time that it purified them. He loved his wife very much and it was both striking and touching to see the intensity of his love for his four children and his grandchildren. He was a perfect father and grandfather and, at the same time, a man belonging entirely to God.

He was also "poor in spirit," completely detached not only from all that he possessed, but above all, from all that he was. He was full of mercy. Even the most wretched sinner felt that he had been forgiven when he was with him and the poorest person felt like a king.

One of his most outstanding characteristics (as is evident from the record of his political career) was that of being a "peacemaker."

He was so meek as to make one understand why the Gospel says that those who live this virtue will possess the earth. His extraordinary kindness, his special way of dealing with others, and his way of finding the right word for each person, won over everyone with whom he came in contact. He treated everyone with respect, making all feel at ease with him. Even young people were able to relate to him as equals. Especially in the last years of his life it was common to hear people say that something supernatural radiated from his eyes when he spoke.

"Blessed are those who mourn," Jesus said. During the course of his life he suffered both physically and spiritually and experienced also this beatitude. As he was well rooted in the mystery of the cross he knew how to transform suffering into love, as if for a divine alchemy, as he

After receiving the "Igino Giordani Prize" Chiara Lubich greeted the local authorities. Politicians, members of the Italian parliament, leaders of cultural activities, friends and fellow-citizens of Igino Giordani were present for the ceremony.

used to say. His "hunger and thirst for justice" led him to struggle for it throughout his entire life. He was "persecuted" for the sake of God's name, and we, therefore, believe that he possesses God's kingdom today. Truly one could read the Gospel in him also when it comes to becoming like little children.

He had been an excellent Christian, a scholar, an apologist, an apostle. Yet when he encountered a genuine spring of water which flowed from the Church, he "sold everything" in order to follow Jesus who was calling him to quench his thirst with this water. He recognized that this was a new sign that the Holy Spirit is always alive and active within the Church.

He also lived the Gospel of humility. If he thought that someone in the Movement wanted to give him special honor because of his past accomplishments, he begged to be treated just like all the others.

Perhaps, however, what stood out most in him was the Gospel of love. He had had a great thirst for God ever since he was a child, but feeling that he was called to live in the midst of the world he had discovered a way to reach that which is eternal. It was perhaps the surest possible way. He described it as consisting of three steps, almost three points of a triangle—I, my neighbor, God. He was convinced that he would have reached God by loving his neighbor, by serving every neighbor he came in contact with throughout the day.

And this is what he did, and his soul reached great heights because the more he loved his neighbor the greater was his union with God. And vice versa: the more he was united with God, the more his love of neighbor grew strong and delicate. This is another reason why he was truly a great Christian—he had focused in on the Gospel law of love which in a sense summarizes all the others: love of neighbor.

Igino Giordani was, however, a very special kind of Christian. In fact, God called him to be a co-founder of a new Movement within the Church to which he gave a unique contribution in the last thirty-two years of his life. He had longed to find a way to fulfill his desire for a total consecration to God as a married person. In 1948 he met the Focolare Movement, just five years after its birth.

He was the one who opened the doors of the Focolare (the women's and men's focolare centers then were made up entirely of people who chose a celibate state of life) to married people. They followed him in his desire for sanctity and consecration. In this way, something which had at first been only vaguely foreseen became a reality—virgins and married people could follow, insofar as it is possible in their state of life, the same way, living after the model of the family of Nazareth.

He was the one who gave an exceptional impulse to the birth of those groups in this Movement which are the mass movements such as the New Family Movement in which married couples make of their family nucleus a small, living Church, or the New Humanity Movement which strives to animate the worlds of work, art, medicine, education, politics and so on with a true Christian spirit.

He personified one of the most important goals of this Movement: to contribute to the unity of Christians.

Above all he was the one who helped the Movement to plant its roots so well in the Church that even during his lifetime he saw its branches expand to all the continents, reaching over 140 nations with all the good that necessarily accompanies it if you consider its Gospel spirit which underlines universal brotherhood, respect and mutual love, unity among all people—all so very timely for a world an- ►

Igino Giordani is seen here with a number of married focolarini from throughout the world. "He was the one who opened the doors of the Focolare to married people."

guished by tension, discrimination, divisions and wars.

Giordani has been one of the greatest gifts that heaven ever gave the Focolare Movement. He generously gave the greater part of his life to this new Movement in the Church which also has another name, the Work of Mary. It is the "Work of Mary," because we all feel that here too, as in other times and places, it is above all Mary, the Virgin, the Mother of the Church and of humanity who is at work. And we think that it was Mary whom he loved so much who rewarded him by making of him one of her chosen children, almost a mystic.

St. Louis Grignon di Montfort, speaking of those people whom the Virgin Mary chooses, says, "The primary gift that these souls acquire is the life of Mary in the soul, here on earth, so that it is no longer the soul which lives but Mary living within it. In other words, the soul of Mary becomes their own, if we can use these words."[1]

In 1957, after having probed the mystery of Mary's desolation at the foot of the cross, Igino Giordani wrote something in his diary which is stupendous, one of the most beautiful and important pieces, speaking from a spiritual point of view, that he ever wrote: "I was meditating on this mystery, on such regality of suffering, on the evening of the First of October, a month sacred to Mary. After prayers, all of a sudden my soul was cleared of human things and persons and in their place Mary entered, together with Jesus, drained of his blood, and the whole abode of my soul was filled by her figure of suffering and of love. And with her in me I grasped the frivolity of my attachment to transient things. For twenty-four hours. She was there, like an altar holding the victim: *Virgo altare Christi*. My soul was her abode, her temple. But at the end of twenty-four hours, sharing in her anguish and love for her brought about a unity between her and my soul: she was no longer my guest, but I was her guest, so that I could say: 'It is no longer I who live but Mary who lives in me.'

"Her presence had, as it were, virginized my soul, marianized my person. My ego seemed to be dead, and in its place Mary was born so that I no longer felt the need to raise my eyes to the street shrines or to statues of the Madonna; it was enough and it is enough for me to turn the gaze of my soul within myself, to discern in the place of the usual grimy and grotesque idol of myself, the All Beautiful One, the Mother of the Fair Love. And even this poor, suffering body seems to me to have become a sort of cathedral, where Mary, with the lifeless Jesus, summons the Bridegroom, who assembles the Trinity.

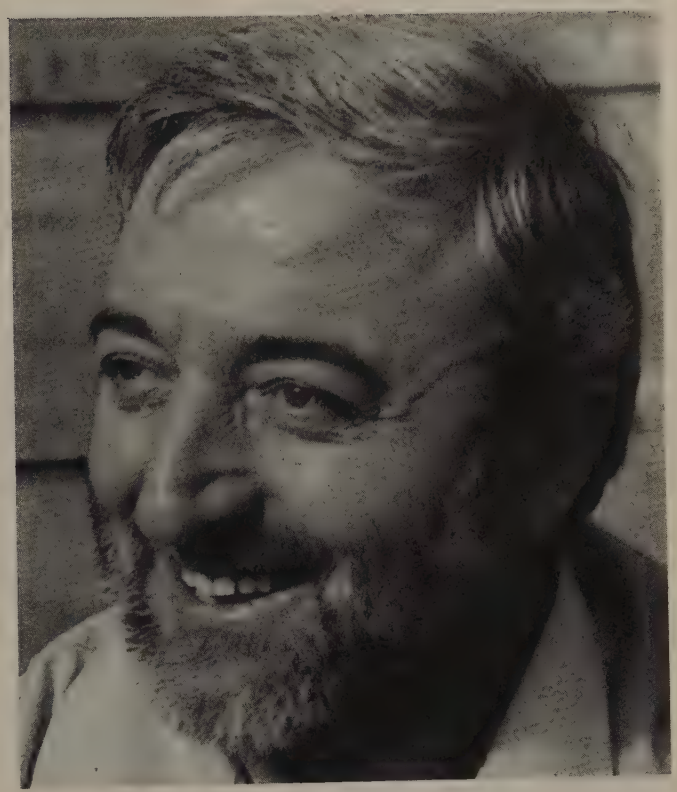
"Unless I am the most utter scoundrel I must become a Saint, to be in harmony with this reality."[2]

We think that, among the many achievements of his life, most probably there is also that of sanctity because this too was Igino Giordani: a true follower of Christ, a man of God. □

1) Louis Grignon de Montfort, "True Devotion," no. 217. 2) Diary of Fire *New City Press, New York.*

Seeking a common ground

We are continuing our publication of the experiences shared by the delegates of the New Humanity Day, June 3, 1984 as examples of efforts made to change or create new relationships in work situations through concrete service.



Everything had to change

Pierangelo Tassano works in a shipyard in northern Italy. He is married with four children. His story offers an example of how suffering can be overcome and transformed into a stronger and more constructive commitment of service towards others, first of all towards those with whom we work.

I have been working in a very large shipyard just outside Genova since 1957, and for more than sixteen years I have been actively taking part as a Christian in the activities of my union.

A few years ago I had a very serious accident on the job. I got caught in the machine I was working on and it started to spin me around at a speed of 129 rotations per minute. My legs, which struck against the pavement over and over again, were mutilated and I received serious injuries to my thorax. When they finally stopped the machine I was in a pitiful state. I had lost both my feet and a lot of blood. In the next few hours after the accident I received over 10 pints of blood. It was the blood, in fact, that kept me alive.

The deepest experience of all for me, however, was the solidarity that I felt around me in those dramatic moments. People with whom up until that day I had had very strong differences of opinion, who had completely opposite political ideas than mine, and for whom, for various reasons, I even bore a certain grudge, stepped forward to donate blood for me.

Up until then, the solidarity that I experienced with my companions at work was the kind that is built among workers working in opposition to management. The solidarity that I experienced on the occasion of my accident was an important value (it became clear to me), an instinct that is rooted deep in the human heart and one which goes beyond circumstances and personal interests.

After serveral months of treatment, surgery and convalescence in different hospitals, I discovered that my life had changed completely. My faith was suddenly shaky. Up until then I had been a fervent Catholic, and as such I had waged bitter battles there in the shipyard. Now I was asking "Why?' "Why this suffering?"

I couldn't say anything to my family or friends. Of course I was grateful to my companions on the job because their actions had saved my life, but that was it. I felt a tremendous solitude. I was nearly desperate. Then came the day when I could go back to work. This fact, instead of encouraging me, created greater problems for me and I became even more depressed.

At this point something very important happened in my life.

A young social worker I knew, with the excuse of taking my mind off things, suggested we take a little trip. Our destination was Loppiano, a mini-city of the Focolare Movement.

At the end of the day we spent there I went off on my own to think about everything I had seen and heard, the joy and fraternity I had noticed. A young man came up to me. I don't know how we got talking, I only know that after a little while I was telling him everything about myself, about the suffering, the rebellion, the bitterness I was experiencing.

He didn't say kind words to console me, but he listened to me with such intensity, with such great interest in me as a person, that I just went on and on emptying myself, freeing myself. Then, in order to share something with me, he started telling me about some of the events of his life. As I listened, I felt hope coming back to me. God had never really abandoned me. He loved me and he loved all: this meant that the solidarity I had in mind could be more than a sporadic event.

My first resolution as I returned to work that week was this: no more arguments. I wanted to try and understand how others felt, how they lived, how they viewed life. I wanted to try and put into practice the word of God there on the job. Soon others noticed the change in me and wanted to do the same. Among the men with whom I work there is a lot of atheism and many have very strong anti-religious feelings. We would like to do something about it. In our little group we have discovered that it is possible to reach out to all. An example. Once, the pact of solidarity made within the union suffered a breakage over a delicate issue. All the rights and privileges gained up until that moment were put in jeopardy. The union leader, a Marxist, was ready to give up completely on the negotiations and force a strike which would have caused serious hardships for the workers. With me and with the others in our group, however, a good relationship of mutual esteem and trust had been built up. He approached us with his plan and we listened without reacting. He then asked us our opinion and we were able to share our ideas on ways of seeking a solution without forcing a strike. Much to our surprise he agreed with our ideas and in turn convinced the others to return to the bargaining table. A lot of unnecessary suffering was avoided.

Beyond procedures

Five employees who work for the Department of Revenue in Italy shared their experiences.

Beniamino Bardo: I used to work very diligently at my job but I never took much of an interest in my other colleagues. When my encounter with the Focolare Movement began to change my way of thinking and acting I saw the people I worked with in a different way. I began to really listen to them when they talked to me. I became interested in their work; I tried to make myself available to them. Before long it seemed that our whole office was working differently. When a difficult case came up we began to consider it and try and solve it together. This created a much more relaxed atmosphere on the job and the process of work was speeded up as well. Many different co-workers, aware of this new atmosphere of collaboration would stop by with questions of a technical nature, estimates on property value, inheritances and so on. Our department became a little resource center for the entire building.

Franco Ciarlo: I saw the change taking place in Beniamino's life style and it definitely influenced mine. At first I wasn't sure; I tried to understand what had happened to him. Then, in the end, I was "taken in", almost against my will, you could say, because when people dropped in looking for Beniamino and he wasn't there they would look at me almost

as if to ask what I was doing there if I wasn't going to help them out with their problem the way that Beniamino did.

I learned to treat the others as he did, and one day Beniamino explained to me the reason behind his way of acting. I was convinced because of what I had seen, and we were two now.

Luisa Bardo: When Beniamino, my husband and co-worker, began to work in this new way, I was against it. I felt I knew my colleagues too well. My husband's ideas and mine about work were at opposite poles yet he went ahead peacefully in his choice of lifestyle while I threw myself into a fever of activity trying to resolve the problems that came up at work and with the union. I had nothing against trying to live the Gospel but somehow I felt that there, where we worked, it just wasn't the case.

There are many employees in the department where I work and we often changed jobs. When a new person was hired the whole flow of work slowed down and it seemed to make matters worse. I found it hard to get along with the public, and I was overwhelmed with the constant difficulties that came up on the job.

One day I was invited to attend a convention of the New Humanity Movement[1] and I decided to go so that I could compare my ideas with others in my field, who encountered the same problems as I did. That day had a very strong effect on me. Perhaps strongest of all was the realization that in all the difficulties I encountered on the job, in my fears and worries, I could recognize an aspect of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken. I couldn't explain it in words but I was sure that I had made a wonderful discovery. Instead of simply putting up with my coworkers, I could love them, I could love my companions in the union. I could even love the person behind the papers I worked with, at my desk, day after day.

I couldn't wait to get back to work and try it. I started right away with a certain colleague with whom I had several differences of opinion on job procedures. I tried to find all the ►

The five employees of the Department of Revenue in Italy who shared their experiences.

points we had in common and work from those. This simple effort of trying to get along with her and of working together had a very positive impact on the rest of our department. Adriana, a colleague of mine and I had had several arguments over different matters. Now I tried to understand her way of seeing things. One day she stopped me in the corridor and asked, "Why are you so much more agreeable now?" I was surprised, but I answered, "Maybe it's because I'm trying to live the Gospel." A month later she said: "I'm reading the Gospel too and it's fascinating."

Adriana Mottola: I'm the Adriana who was constantly making life difficult for Luisa. I did not believe in God, but Luisa and her husband showed me another side to Christianity, one that I was convinced did not exist. I saw them change right before my eyes; I saw them making the effort to free themselves from old prejudices and be open to everyone. By nature I am a very timid person but I felt at ease with them.

One day a group of us were talking and the topic of our conversation was social justice. Luisa's comment was that a person cannot be obligated by force in such matters, they must be urged from within, acting out of love.

I thought it was too good to be true, but the idea of reading the Gospel came to my mind. ...And as Luisa said, the Gospel fascinated me. Luisa then invited me to a gathering of the Movement. At the end of that day I could have repeated with Saint Augustine, "Your splendor dispelled my blindness."

My husband also did not practice any religion but he had always been seaching for something that would give meaning to his life. He became involved in the change that was taking place in me. We both attended a Mariapolis. the summer gathering of the Movement and there, in that atmosphere of mutual love lived among the participants, I could see he was finding the answer to the many questions that had troubled him for so long. So much so that, shortly after the Mariapolis, when my husband became seriously ill with an incurable disease, we accepted the news with peace, believing in the love of God.

The entire office is living this illness with our family, helping us both spiritually and materially. When my husband was hospitalized for a series of tests Luisa and Chinu arrived with an envelope. Everyone at the office had wanted to contribute something to help us meet the expenses.

We have a ten-year-old son. If anything happened to me what would he do? I had thought in the past we have no close relatives on either side. Now, however, I felt that my family extended well beyond the natural limits. I asked Luisa and Beniamino if they would take care of our son if anything happened to me. They immediately replied yes, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

I see my son as a very fortunate child because he has had his encounter with God, an encounter that his father and I sought for our entire life and found just before it was too late.

Chinu Colombo: I worked for a number of years in the same office with Beniamino and Franco and I was also touched by their way of life. I was struck by the joy I saw in their faces; it was like the joy you see in people who have finally found what they have always been looking for.

In the department where I worked we had a lot to do with the public and usually they came in very suspicious of us. I saw, however, that by trying to put the Gospel into practice my relationship with them changed.

Others in the office also began, almost instinctively, to treat the people differently. Now those who come in understand that we are not there to get their money out of them at any cost, but to serve them, trying to understand their needs. A lady once told us, "It used to be a disaster to come in here. Now it's *almost* a pleasure." And another man: "I was furious when I came in, and determined that I wasn't going to pay any taxes at all, but you treated me so well that even if I have to pay I'm happy all the same." Others now feel free to ask us for help in matters that have nothing to do with our office.

Naturally things are not always smooth and we each find that our commitment to live in this way must be renewed day by day. Lately a few people have retired or moved. This means starting all over with a new group. Not only that, but not everyone in the office agrees with our way of dealing with people and some of us have undergone rather severe verbal attacks. We feel, however, that for a Christian it is part of the picture, and we try to accept even our failures with humility and without becoming discouraged, helping one another to go ahead. □

1) See inside back cover.

In the light of the present moment

We present to you the second episode in the life of Rosa Pagan, a woman who lived a very simple life, but who, particularly in the last years of her still-young life, did all the ordinary things in an extraordinary way. We follow her now after her departure from her native Puerto Rico to the United States where a new adventure requiring remarkable courage and stamina awaited her.

Arrival and life in the United States

With remarkable courage and great hopes for the future, Rosa left the only land she had ever known and traveled with her three young children to the continental United States, where she made a home for them in Paterson, New Jersey.

"*I no longer walk with bare feet on the humid paths of my land,*" she wrote at that time. "*I am no longer the child intoxicated with the perfume of the jasmines. Nor am I any longer the adolescent with new shoes that pursues dreams without end, anxious to reach the light.*

"*Nor am I the woman strong, yes, but who still looks for a companion on which to lean, to be guided by him, who in turn, weakened by confused desires, would need to be guided. These are other times.*"

Rosa's past could easily have clouded the present, but she would not permit it to do so. "*The past is in the mercy of God,*" she wrote. "*It does not belong to me. He has made everything new. It is in the light of the present moment that I begin my long journey towards the light.*"

Reverend Jose Alonso, a young Catholic priest who met Rosa and her sons shortly after their arrival in the United States, described her situation in these terms: "She had her three little boys, and she used to receive Welfare and live in the projects. But she had only one thing on her mind—that she had to do something to better herself."

Rosa was a woman of action. When she learned that her ten years of experience as a grammar-school teacher in Puerto Rico would not be recognized in the United States, she resolved to return to college and acquire the certification she would need to get a good job.

"She didn't drive," Father Alonso related. "She didn't have any money, and yet she managed to put herself through college. She even had to walk miles at times to attend classes at Montclair State College, but she did it just the same. And in spite of all this she still had time for her children...."

She had time for her children, and for her parish as well. Peter Risech, a young man who came to Paterson from Cuba, remembers Rosa very well. At that time Peter was part of the same parish organization as Rosa. When the members of the group decided to hold a day of recollection the winter of 1965, he invited someone from the Focolare Movement, which he had just recently met himself, to address the group. "I still recall very vividly how everything happened," he said recently. "This day of recollection was going to be held in Mountain Lake, New Jersey. It was very cold that night, and it was raining terribly. We had an old school bus that one of the men in the parish was planning to drive to Mountain Lake, however the bus broke down just a ►

few blocks from the church. In the pouring rain, the man went out and got it started again. Rosa Pagan was with us on the bus, and it was that night that she met the spirituality of the Focolare Movement for the very first time."

That same night, Rosa made a brief entry in her diary: "*The Focolare: Movement for* **Unity**, *and of Love (Fire). To live your everyday life for Christ. To do everything for him. To see him in everyone, as a continuation of your communion with him in the Eucharist every morning, To love always. In this way we will become another Jesus, another Mary.*"

From that evening on, Rosa's association with the Focolare Movement became an always deeper and more vital part of her life. Many years later she would write: "*Thank you, Lord, for your limitless providence, spiritual as well as material. Thank you for everything. You have led me out of the dark period of my life and freed me from it. You have shown me your paths.... Thank you for having brought me to the Focolare Movement.... How much nourishment and happiness it has brought into my life!*"

After graduation

After graduating from Montclair State College in the Spring of 1966, Rosa applied for a position teaching Spanish at a high school in Princeton, New Jersey. Her oldest son, Jose, explained why: "At that time, most of the teenagers in Paterson were involved with drugs and the like, and many kids were getting into trouble. My mother wanted to get us away from that culture, to give us a new life."

It was Professor Frank Soda, then Head of the Language Department at Princeton High School, who interviewed Rosa for the job. He related how he had come to meet her: "I was talking to the director of the program at Montclair State College, and I mentioned to him that I was looking for a person to teach Spanish. He then told me about this interesting woman who had gone to Montclair and managed to become a certified Spanish teacher. Although she had no experience teaching yet in American schools, I decided to speak with her about the job. I was very impressed with her credentials and by the fact that, given the circumstances, she'd had the foresight and perseverance to progress, while at the same time taking care of her family."

Rosa was offered the position, and Professor Soda explained why: "I was very impressed, obviously, by her knowledge of the language; but her human characteristics appealed to me even more. Apparently I was not wrong in that assessment of her credentials, because when she began to teach, the students felt the same way."

In the summer of 1966 Rosa attended a Mariapolis, the annual summer gathering of the Focolare Movement, and later that same month, she and the children moved to Princeton. Rosa found her new job very fulfilling. "She seemed to have an understanding of young people," Professor Soda noted. "She was extremely patient with them without being lax in her classroom discipline. She was a fine communicator, whether she was speaking in Spanish or English. The students were very attracted to her. They were quite cooperative because of her patience and understanding in the classroom."

Rosa herself attributed her understanding of young people to those still-clear memories of her own youth, of the days she went from one thing to another finding nothing truly fulfilling. "*These are difficult times for our children,*" she wrote at about this time. "*The influences that increase the confusion are more than those that bring them towards the light. Because of this, I try to understand the youth of today, the young people that God has put under my guidance, whether because of parental ties or because they are entrusted to me, and also those whom I know only by sight or whom I don't know at all. All are present in my heart. At times thinking of the future of my boys and of all, I tremble for fear that they won't have wings for the infinite, that they will not find the true light.*"

Her sons

Oftentimes, Rosa looked at her own three sons with sorrow, fearing that they had not acquired these "wings for the infinite," and she worried that she was to blame.

"*Chiara*[1] *says that the children of married focolarini*[2] *have been nourished with the milk of the Ideal,*" she wrote on one occasion. "*She says their parents can truly say that they have given birth to them two times: first to their natural life, and then to their spiritual one.*

How beautiful! I cannot say it for my own children though, and this fact is like a thorn in my flesh. Undoubtedly, the fault is my own."

"Put your love in my heart, so that I can give it to my sons," she asked Jesus. *"Give me a love that is peace, joy, forgiveness and mercy. Then that peace and joy which the world cannot give will reign among us."*

Rosa tried to guide her sons through example rather than force. "You'd look at her," Jose recalled, "and she didn't have to tell you, 'I'm going to spank you', or 'I'll punish you'. It was enough to see her, and you knew which way you should go. That's one thing about her which I'll never forget.

"She told us what was right and what was wrong," he continued. "But if we took a step in the wrong direction she'd never stop us and say, 'Look, you're doing it all wrong.' She left us on our own, in other words, free to do what we wanted. However in the back of her mind, I think she was always praying for us to do the right thing."

Jose guessed right. Rosa prayed for her sons daily, asking above all that the spiritual values so precious to her would take root in them and flourish.

"I place my children in Mary's hands," she wrote in her diary one day. *"She will place them in the heart of her son. And one day they will be born again to a new life. That day will come whether or not I am here to see it. It's up to her. I must gather the 'kindling wood' to light the flame, so that one day my children will understand the true meaning of Christian life."*

Italian Tourism Office

"Give me a love that is peace, joy, forgiveness and mercy. Then that peace and joy which the world cannot give will reign among us."

Perhaps they understood even more than Rosa realized. When her sons reflect on their lives today they note how the traits which stood out in her life have given them something to strive towards in their own.

"My mother had kindness and perseverance," Jose noted. "She always *believed* in kindness, that no matter how bad people were to you, you should always be good to them, because in the long run, kindness will be the winner. This is exactly what she did.

"I always think the way she thought," he went on, "I don't believe in taking an eye for an eye when people hurt me. I try to be good to them no matter how badly they treat me."

And Eddie commented: "My mother always told me, 'See with the eyes of the others. Feel what the others are feeling'."

"I would like to show the whole world all that God has done for me," Rosa wrote from Princeton, *"but he wants me to remain in this 'little world', my family. It is little, but of immeasurable value: three souls for my Lord, three precious gems—my sons. My apostolate must be here among them."*

To be continued.

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1) Chiara Lubich is the founder and president of the Focolare Movement. 2) (See inside back cover).

WORD OF LIFE

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."
(1 Cor. 10:31)

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."

"...Do all for the glory of God." How can we give glory to God?

There are different ways. One of them is trying to please God by living his commandments, especially the commandment of love of neighbor. When we love our neighbor we give glory to God, and this is what Saint Paul means. Therefore his words could be read also like this: "So, whether you eat or drink, as in any other thing you do, remember to love your neighbor."

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."

What do eating and drinking have to do with love of neighbor?

In order to understand this we should look at the historical situation which led Saint Paul to speak in these terms.

In the pagan world of his times it was normal practice to sacrifice animals in temples dedicated to false deities. Only a small portion of the meat of these animals could be eaten during the sacrifice itself. The rest was sold in the market-place where Christians might happen to buy it; or it might be offered to them during a meal with friends or acquaintances.

A well-informed Christian knew that it was one thing to participate in the meal which accompanied the sacrifice in the pagan temples, and it was another thing to eat at home the meat which had been bought at the market even if it came from the pagan temples. In the first case one would commit the sin of idolatry which was to be avoided at any cost. The second case, instead, involved nothing of that sort.

It could happen however, that for a less-informed and rather scrupulous Christian the act of eating the meat of animals which had been sacrificed to idols was a very disturbing matter. In a case such as this—Saint Paul said—if you realize that your behavior gives scandal to your neighbor it is better to abstain from eating this type of meat. Give up that freedom which you know you have by virtue of a more enlightened conscience, and adapt yourself, out of love, to the weaker conscience of your neighbor. Remember, even when eating and drinking, to love your neighbor.

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."

In this sentence, taken in its proper context, Saint Paul is also telling us what it really means to love our neighbor. To love means to make ourselves one with our neighbor in everything except of course in sin. To love means to know how to give up our own viewpoints, our own tastes, our time, our freedom in order to put ourselves on the level of our neighbor.

To love means to constantly live outside of ourselves in order to "live the other". Jesus brought this life style on earth. He was like us in all things except sin (cf. Heb. 4:15); "He was rich but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). "His state was divine, but he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave" (Phil. 2:6). Throughout his whole life Jesus gave up his rights, he descended to the level of "the least," he eliminated every distance, he communicated to us his words of eternal life in a way that all could understand.

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."

How can we live this word of life? We can live it by making ourselves one with the other in every situation, even in those that apparently are most commonplace. "Whether you eat or drink...."

It means taking advantage of the very many opportunities that arise during the day to adapt ourselves to our neighbor's mentality. It means being more aware of the

negative effects that our way of doing or presenting certain ideas can have on others.

There are many factors which can hinder us in trying to love others. At times we cannot make ourselves one with our neighbor because we are already too concerned with our own worries, our own sufferings, our own programs, our own activities.

At others times we are distracted or we are overhasty in giving our ideas, or we offer our advice in the wrong moment. At times we are reluctant to make ourselves one with our neighbor because we feel that they do not understand our way of loving, or we hold back because of a certain judgment we may have made against a person.

Another fault in which we can incur is that of imposing our ideas on the others without first listening to theirs, either to speed things up, or because we are convinced that our way is the best, or we know how to do things better. No, this is not love. Love means making ourselves one with the others as a mother makes herself one with her child, as God did in becoming a man out of love for us.

To 'make ourselves one': three little words that explain love.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

More than the math problems were solved

I have a son who is ten years old and very sensitive. Sometimes it is difficult to talk to him when he is having a particularly hard day. He gets upset very easily and then begins to cry. When he doesn't understand something in his homework, he works himself up to the point that he will just sit rubbing his eyes until he can get some help from one of his sisters. They ususally end up giving him the answer instead of trying to help him to understand the problem.

I have tried to help him on several occasions but I also get frustrated because he really isn't trying to understand; he just wants the answer. Because of this he no longer comes to me for help.

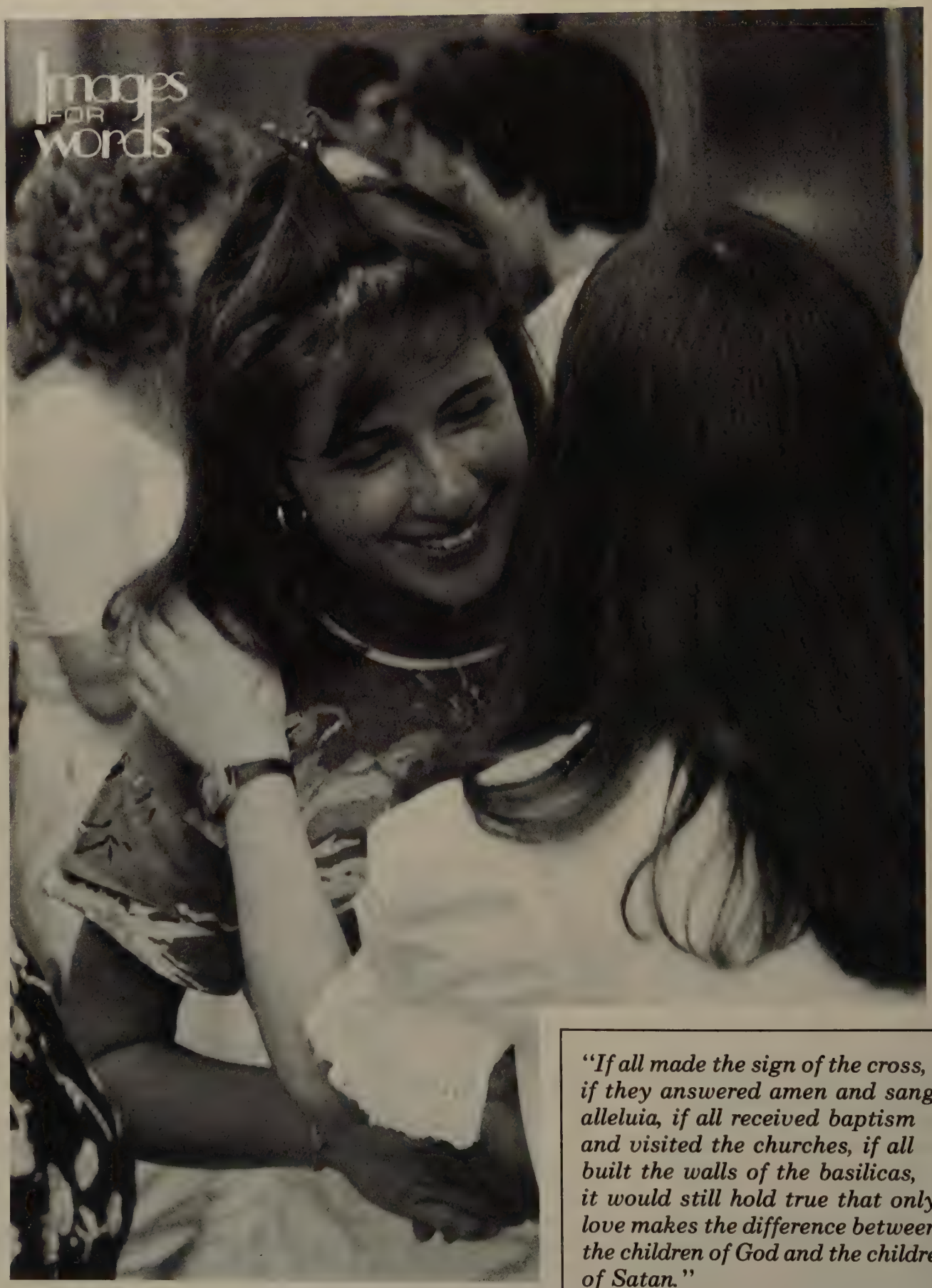
One day as I was watching him do his homework I realized that my attitude was all wrong. I was not loving him in the way he needed. The word of life that we were living that month seemed so appropriate at this time: "So get rid of all the old yeast and make yourselves a completely new patch of bread, unleavened as you are meant to be, Christ our passover has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). All I could think of was that the moment had come to get rid of the old yeast and to make myself 'new' again in loving my son who was having so much difficulty just in that moment.

With as much love as I could I began to explain how to do his math problem but he was so upset at the fact that he couldn't get it that he thought I was just going to give up on him as I had done before. I began again, trying with my actions to show him that I would keep working with him until he understood how to do his math. It took awhile before he was really sure that I meant it, but eventually he calmed down and was able to really listen to my explanation.

We worked together for over an hour. It meant starting over again and again but I felt at the end that we had taken a new step together.

My son thanked me with a big smile of satisfaction now knowing how to solve the problems himself. My daughters were amazed at his change of attitude.

E.B.



"If all made the sign of the cross, if they answered amen and sang alleluia, if all received baptism and visited the churches, if all built the walls of the basilicas, it would still hold true that only love makes the difference between the children of God and the children of Satan."

SAINT AUGUSTINE

Augustine and the fascination of God!

by SILVANO COLA

Continuing our imaginary journey through the first centuries of Christianity, we stop to consider one of the greatest minds ever, the African theologian and saint, Augustine.

Augustine Aurelius depicted in what is held to be the oldest existing image of him. (Fresco from the VI century in the "Sancta Sanctorum" of the Lateran Basilica.)

Unable to get to Hippo due to the seige the Vandals had maintained throughout the year 430 A.D., I was prevented from meeting that giant among men, that "great convert" who, with his most acute mind, governed his diocese and illuminated the world from within a monastery which he had founded with some fellow priests. There was no corner of the Empire wherein his activities and words were not discussed.

A bishop who ruled from within a brotherhood of priests! This fact had impressed me from the moment I had heard it. Until then I thought all monks lived in communities almost estranged from the world, its life and its problems, and yet there, in Hippo, was a bishop surrounded by priests who chose to live with him the same life the Apostles and the first Christians had lived, a life of poverty, chastity and obedience ... yet be so involved in the life of the Church and the world around them.

That man—surely you know his name as well as I do, even if you may know very little else about him, as I did—was Bishop Augustine, consecrated co-adjutor bishop in 395, and elected as sole Bishop of Hippo the very next year, and who died on August 28, 430. I am convinced that for all that he has written in his books, and said in his many talks, he modestly omitted to tell what must have been the underlying principle of his spirituality.

For this reason I have come to Calama, in Numidia, to see Bishop Possidius who was with Augustine when he died. Who knew the mind and soul of Augustine better than he? Bishop Possidius has just completed writing a biography of the late bishop, and in the final chapters he stated: "We (the monks) had lived for almost forty years in companionship with this man, without ever having any disputes of any kind." Although Bishop Possidius had been made bishop in 397 he had returned to Hippo to assist Augustine during those times of horror and bloodshed when the massacres, fires and pillages which were carried out by the Goths and Vandals during their invasions of the Roman Provinces of North Africa.

He who had envisioned, and seen in history, the gradual establishment of "The City of God" in unity and peace, died convinced that the "earthly city"—despite the fact that it was living and boosting itself in selfishness and contention—was singing of victory!

I found Bishop Possidius, a lively and clear-thinking seventy year old. Of Augustine's death he said: "I thank God ►

that he spared Augustine the ultimate horror of seeing his city of Hippo burned by the Barbarians. He died at the beginning of the siege which began in 430, as you know. But it was not for that reason that I said that this genius with the eyes of a hawk was spared the ultimate suffering. In fact, far from it. One might almost say that such is the destiny of those whom God loves the most! Does not the very life of Christ himself demonstrate the truth of this? Let me make it quite clear; Augustine died with a sense of the total failure of his mission. His final prayer to the Father was a heart-rending cry that his sole remaining hope was that, despite everything, Love would still be victorious ... and then he uttered those words which expressed for him the ultimate tragedy ... 'But when?'

Everything depends upon the answer to that 'when', so far as he was concerned. So now try and picture Augustine, long weeks spent in bed awaiting death, while all around him the destruction and plundering gave him the feeling that Satan had already in effect won his battle, and that everything he had worked for, everything that he had done, and above all everything about which he had warned his people, now seemed to have been of no avail.

"As Jesus had cried out in his agony, so Augustine wept. He, the friend of the Father, the cleverest of prodigal sons who had been born again in the womb of the Blessed Trinity because he believed in the omnipotence of the Father's love, could not find the confidence to cry 'Father'. He could only murmur 'God, have mercy on me who invokes you from the bottom of an abyss'."

"But it is precisely this that puzzles me," I interrupted. "Wasn't he perhaps the most penetrating of all those who studied the Blessed Trinity? Wasn't he the one who put an end to all the disputes over it? How then could all that you have said come about?"

The eyes of Bishop Possidius glowed like little fires in the night as he answered my question.

"Oh yes," he answered, "and Augustine had done it not only with his head, I mean writing his books and his sermons, but above all with his life. It was his favorite subject and, since he was also a great philosopher, when he spoke of the Trinity it was as if he were able to see further than anyone else.

"Of course, by this time, it is true that the Arian heresy had been thoroughly silenced, and lingered on more in the villages than in the larger cities. Even so, I can still seem to hear the protests of that grumpy but very faithful soul, Jerome of Strido who, when beseiged in the Chalcidonian desert by Arian fanatics who wanted to make him profess a creed in words which he—a westerner couldn't understand, defended himself by shouting out: 'I stand by the Chair of Peter, and whoever is united to the See of Peter is with me! Do you think I was not baptized? When I was baptized would I not have made my profession of Faith? That then, is what I believe.'

"What I am trying to say is that Augustine found that he did not have to battle against the Arian heresy any more, even if he often referred to it over and over so that the faithful would not fall into it again. Consequently he had become more able to contemplate with a greater inner calmness and expound the understanding of the Trinity more easily, as time went on. But, you know, at times he found it difficult to speak about it, even to the faithful, and as you can imagine the faithful found it even more difficult to understand what he meant.

"I remember that on one Sunday he delivered a long sermon to a packed congregation in the Cathedral—as it unsually was. He began by saying that many people believe that they will find happiness either in power, or wealth, or honor, or in the pleasures of the flesh. Real happiness, however, is found only in the Trinity and by those who seek to imitate it. From this he launched into an exposition on the mystery of the Trinity which, in my opinion, was the most extraordinary and yet totally complete synthesis of this mystery of

Ostia: one of the seaports of Ancient Rome where Augustine and his mother Monica lived before departing for Africa, and where Monica died. Here the famous episode described in Augustine's Confessions *took place wherein Monica and Augustine felt themselves immersed in the trinitarian life of God-Love.*

faith. I think he noticed that some of those good Christian souls had nodded off to sleep. The next Sunday he began his homily with these words, "You will understand all the teaching contained in the Holy Scriptures, my dear brothers and sisters, without fear of making any mistakes and without any difficulty whatsoever, if your heart overflows with love. You don't have time to study the Scriptures? You don't have time to read the books that explain them? Then live by love, because without love nothing can be explained, while with love you will have learned something that cannot be found in books, and you will understand evenmore the most difficult pages of the Bible. Seek therefore to have love within you, that sweet and saving bond of all minds. Without it a rich person is a pauper, while those who have love within themselves, even though they are penniless, are wealthy.'

"On another Sunday he said this: 'Without love, how can any of you expect to even begin to understand this deepest of mysteries? Without love you are only chasing rainbows, grasping at shadows'."

Next I asked the bishop, "What would you say was the secret of his brilliance? Could you tell me about his spiritual life as you came to understand it, bishop?"

The old bishop who, during his last statement had often smiled to himself, became very serious and paused before answering. His head fell forward on his chest in an effort to concentrate, and he gave me the impression that he was trying, almost for the first time, to describe the spiritual characteristics of this very great and very famous friend.

"You see," he began very gently, "I still haven't managed to understand whether Augustine, because of his temperament was more in love with Love, or with Truth. Now I realize perfectly well that these two are virtually synonymous, and that he knew that as well as we do; but I often have asked myself which of these two had been most decisive in his life. He certainly could not have survived alone. A soul such as his needed both to love and be loved. Even so, the search for truth was for him an obsession. Do you know the story of his life?"

I shook my head, not so much because I didn't know because I knew what everyone else had also heard, but I wanted to hear it from this man who had known him better than most.

"He experienced love fairly early in his adult life, and not surprisingly it came from the usual and obvious source. He fell in love with a girl with whom he hoped to find his life's fulfillment. But it was not to be. At the same time, being also a scholar, the rational needs of his brain urged him to reject as infantile fantasies the beliefs taught him by his saintly mother Monica. At that time he believed that he could satisfy his rational needs with Manichean philosophy. However, he was too intelligent not to see the superficiality of both his philosophy and his attitude to love. Consequently the philosopher, still being very much in control, went to Rome to seek a solution to his needs in intellectual friendships with other scholars. From Rome he went to Cassiciaco with three friends and fellow scholars Alipio, Romaniano and Nebridius. Monica went with them to look after them, which she did as if they were all her own sons.

Another great influence on Augustine at that time was Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. His sermons made Augustine realize that the spiritual content of Holy Scripture is infinitely superior to anything offered by the various schools of philosophy he had followed, and ►

that maybe his mother's faith had a much more reasoned and comprehensive foundation than any other system of philosophy. "Was it then thanks to his mother's faith that Augustine achieved his full interior peace, that blessed unity of body, mind and spirit, that he had been so frantically seeking?

Was Monica's God someone who was real and true, and possible for him to love—and by whom to feel loved?

"His struggle continued until that day when he cried out, 'At last I understand! True happiness lies only in our vision and love of God!' He was baptized and, in his own words, he felt 'born again'.

"Haven't you read in his book *Confessions* where he describes his experience, that moment of truth, of light and of love wherein he understood that only the Truth exists and that the world is nothing'?

I think that it was then and there that Augustine first really comprehended the Trinity as Truth Uncreated and as Love Uncreated, the very prototype of love as it should be lived on earth. Was this not the life which Jesus came to reveal to all mankind: 'Is it not divine love which makes of two souls one and brings them to long for the same thing?' he wrote. 'So it is with the Trinity: the Father is total Love, the Son is Love from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is Love from the Father and the Son together. Something similar happens in us if we have that Love in us which unites us by making us children of God.... Are you surprised that there are Three in

Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan. His sermons brought Augustine to a new understanding of the spiritual content of Holy Scripture as being infinitely superior to that offered in the schools of philosophy.

One God?' Augustine writes. 'Have you not read in the Acts of the Apostles that the first Christians were of one heart and one soul? They were many souls but they loved one another and they became one. They were on fire with love for God and many joined them in that sublime Unity'."

For a moment I too was carried away by the inspiration of his words. Then I asked the bishop: "And was that what he also wanted, as a bishop, to live with other priests?"

The answer was immediate. "Yes, I lived with him for years. You could say that the rule of the community could be summed up in these words: 'The principal reason for our living together is to live in peace and to have among us one heart and one soul ... in God.... What a profound significance that word 'peace' had for Augustine. Peace is God. Peace is the fruit of mutual love. The only thing that Augustine could not bear was a breach of unity due to a failure to love. For him that was is if he were watching the very break up of the Trinity itself. '

I had time for one more question. "But didn't all this simply serve to build up an ardent desire to be always 'in the Father's house'?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. 'But there was a house to be built on earth as sons of the Father, because Jesus, by becoming a man had made it possible. Augustine defeated evil with good.

"Now we, even in our own history, with love, can construct the City of God, and have the certainty that all the forces of evil which dwell in man and overflow onto society, are powerless against two souls who relive the Trinity.

"Any person—as Augustine has written—through the image of God which we carry within ourselves, has a never-ending call to be with God, or to return to him. Maybe he only needs someone to show him the path." □

That glorious age of fifteen

After almost thirteen years of teaching, my colleagues are still asking me the same question: "But how do you discipline your students? What do you do?" And I always try to explain that I try to establish a rapport with each one. I take them one by one and try to understand them as individuals, seeing to each one's needs; working with each one and trying to be love for each. It's a long and hard job but it's worth it. Love always wins out in the end. I have never met a student who did not, sooner or later, respond to love. But this time, for the first time in my life, I felt that I had.

She was fifteen; that glorious age when they seem so grown up, yet are in reality still children. I saw immediately as she entered the room that this was going to be *some* struggle. And it was.

Each day, she would come late to my class. And then as she entered my classroom she would ask if she could go somewhere else—the girls' room, cafeteria and so on. I would say no and a big fight would start in front of the class. She would scream at me and I would yell back at her. This was a repeat performance, day in and day out. Then other days, when she *would* come on time, she would disrupt my class, yell out or talk to her friend who sits on the opposite side of the room. She would do this constantly while I was teaching. Then it would start. I would reprimand her and she'd yell back. We'd lose at least five minutes of class each day because I would refuse to continue until she'd apologize for her lack of respect. Then we'd go back to the lesson. While all of this was going on, I'd find myself waking up in the morning saying, "Please, Lord, give me the strength to love this kid. I can't go in there and face her another day." Then I'd try to go in as if it were the first day we met. Of course our war would begin immediately.

Finally one evening I thought that perhaps contacting the parents would be a help. But when I called the brother explained that the mother was working and the father had just passed away two months before. As I hung up the phone I thought to myself: "Well, now you know what the problem is. This kid needs to be loved in a special way."

The next day in school I approached this student and said how sorry I was about her dad. She simply said, "Yeh, thanks," and walked away. From then on I really tried to be love for her in a special way. I'd try to be more patient and give her extra help with her work. But still, the girl seemed to be becoming *more* of a discipline problem rather than less. In fact, things got so bad that I decided to simply give up.

And that's exactly what I did. I began to yell at her constantly whenever she was disruptive, and I would go so far as even to insult her in front of the class, hoping eventually she would drop my course altogether.

It was clear to everyone that I was her enemy number one and she was mine. I remember thinking that this was someone I just couldn't love. I was just incapable of doing it. I was quite aware that I was supposed to, but I just couldn't. And the more I tried to ignore her and not love her the more uncomfortable I felt. It couldn't be that I was capable of living in peace with everyone but her. I knew *I* had to change and I asked God to help me. This time *he* had to help me find a way.

One day she was absent from class altogether. Her guidance counselor came to see me. She explained that the reason the girl had missed my class was because that morning she had been found crying in the girls' room. It seemed she was extremely upset and for the first time since her father's death she was letting all her emotions out, everything that she had kept inside for two months. The counselor asked me not to report this absence from class because it could have meant a suspension. "Tell her it will be our secret," I told the counselor. "And tell her that I'm here if she needs me for anything."

I couldn't believe the change that took place after that. A new rapport began. My little friend no longer comes late to class and if she suddenly call out of turn she apologizes. We are working together to put harmony back where it certainly was lacking.

I was grateful to God for not letting me give up.

G.G.

(Continued from page 7)
life, wounded in their dignity and oppressed in their freedom and their faith ... May Christ help you to live in that true solidarity which crosses frontiers and overcomes prejudices!

A longing for peace

You are citizens of a country that enjoys peace but you are concerned about the future of humanity. You long for peace from the depths of your hearts.... Begin with where you are.... As Madame Sauve said recently, "Peace must become a state of soul—a way of being, of working."

Today, often you do not find it easy to take your place in the community of the baptized. Some of you say that you do not see the Church as the place where it is natural to be united with one another by the Christ of the Gospel. The building seems to you to be too big, built in a style different from your own. The "light that enlightens" is blocked by too many shadows.

It is true that the community is still far from being the perfect mirror that would reflect the whole face of Christ. It is true that unity remains a goal too often contradicted. It is true, in a word, that the Church called by our Savior to be assembled in him, is on the path of conversion and that there is still a long way to go.

Nevertheless, you the young, remember that Jesus asked us not to set ourselves up as judges (cf. Mt. 7:1-5). Do not remain either on the threshold, or outside. Do not let yourselves be tempted to expect the Church to be just a reflection of yourselves....

You rightly expect your elders to accept you with tolerance and to respect you for what you are. You must do the same for them.

...(The Church) is for everyone the place to encounter him who dwells among us ... a place where all are called to share, to give thanks, to join in the Eucharist ... to receive the gift of forgiveness.... Take your place in the life of this body. Bring to it your enthusiasm. Contribute your expression of faith and prayer, with your poetic gift and your desire to commit yourself.

If he calls, listen

And if there should arise in you the desire to consecrate your life to the service of God and of your brothers and sisters in the ministry of the Church, in religious life, know how to recognize in it the call of Christ and respond with the boundless generosity of youth...

There is one last point that I wish to address, because you are deeply interested in it. It concerns your questions about marriage and about the love of a couple and love in marriage.

In reading your letters I have been impressed that they express much pain. Too many of you suffer because of the breakdown of family life, because of separation and divorce; and you have been wounded to the point of sometimes doubting whether a faithful and lasting love is possible.

It is not ours to judge those who have been hurt by the upheaval affecting morals and society. But I say to you: do not doubt; you can build a home on the rock of fidelity, because you can count totally on the fidelity of God who is love. Prepare yourselves for a worthwhile and true commitment of marriage. React against the false illusions and do not confuse a premature experience of pleasure with the giving of oneself in love, deliberately consented to, and forever. When, as man and woman, you bind your lives together, decide to do so with complete generosity, each one desiring first the well-being of the other, together desiring to communicate life and to ensure the welfare of your children. Prepare yourselves for the one commitment that is worthy of human love, the commitment of marriage in order to build something that deserves and requires the whole of one's life....

Seekers after truth

In the name of Christ, I ask you: when you are overcome by weariness or seized by doubt, break out of the bonds of your loneliness ... join with your brothers and sisters in order to walk together, seek the support of your elders.Remain seekers after truth. Use with courage the rich gifts that are within you. Give yourselves without reserve to the service of justice, of peace, of freedom and of love in the light of Christ.

Quebec, like your powerful river, you are a country with a generous nature. You know how to channel your rivers. Do you know how to channel the energies of your youth for the service of the whole human person and of all humanity loved by God?...

Turn, my dear young friends, at each stage of your journey towards (Christ) in whom dwells the fullness of God.... □

Excerpts from L'Osservatore Romano *English Edition, Sept. 24 & Oct. 1, 1984.*

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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